

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE AlNEW YORK TIMES
1 June 1985

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F.B.I. WIDENS NET IN SOVIET SPY CASE

Group of at Least 3 on Coast
Now Under Surveillance

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, May 31 — The Federal Bureau of Investigation has begun surveillance of a group of California men who once worked in the Navy with John A. Walker Jr., who is accused of spying for the Soviet Union, Government officials said today.

It could not be determined if any of the men under surveillance were still in Navy. But there are at least three of them, according to the officials, who asked not to be identified.

Identified as 'D'

One is a former Navy man now living in northern California who was identified by Mr. Walker as "D" in secret documents recovered by investigators, the officials said.

The group is apparently not tied to Mr. Walker's private detective concern in Virginia Beach, Va. Government officials said earlier this week that several members of that concern were close to being arrested.

Meanwhile, a group that monitors the Ku Klux Klan said Mr. Walker identified himself as state director of the Klan in Virginia on a radio talk show in 1980. And Bill Wilkinson, a former Klan leader, said today that he and Mr. Walker were close friends when they served together on a nuclear submarine. "I felt like he was a patriot," Mr. Wilkinson said. "I can recall cussing commies with him."

The disclosure of surveillance in

California brings to at least nine the number of people under investigation for involvement in the purported spying. Navy officials have described the case as potentially the most serious in Navy history.

Mr. Walker, 47 years old, has been accused of conspiring with his brother and son to pass secret Navy documents to the Soviet Union. All three served in the Navy.

In reaction to the case, Senator Sam Nunn of Georgia, the ranking Democratic member of the Senate Armed Forces Committee, called on President Reagan to cut by half the number of people who have access to classified documents. "We've got to tighten down," he said. Such a position has long been pressed by the President.

The Government officials said Mr. Walker, a former Navy communications officer, probably met the men now under surveillance while he was stationed in California in the 1960's and 1970's. He served in Vallejo, Calif., in 1963 and in San Diego from 1969 to 1971.

Earlier this week prosecutors disclosed excerpts from a note they said Mr. Walker had written to a Soviet diplomat. The letter, prosecutors said, identified a "D" who was involved in the operation.

According to the officials, "D" is a former Navy man who does not belong to the Walker family.

He is believed to live near either Sacramento or San Francisco, they said. They would not be specific about when and where the man supposedly met Mr. Walker. Nor would they say if he had been an enlisted man.

Mr. Walker served in Vallejo between cruises on the nuclear-powered submarine Andrew Jackson, which was armed with Polaris missiles. He worked on the submarine as a radioman, a job that permitted him access to large amounts of secret Navy intelligence, officials say.

While in San Diego several years later, Mr. Walker worked at the naval training center as assistant director of the school for radiomen. He left in December 1971 after nearly three years and was transferred to Norfolk, Va.

He retired in 1976 and opened a private detective firm in Norfolk.

Mr. Walker's son, Michael, 22, and brother, Arthur, 50, are also charged with espionage, which carries a maximum sentence of life in prison.

Michael Walker, a yeoman third class aboard the aircraft carrier Nimitz, is accused of stealing secret documents from the ship and smuggling them to his father. His uncle, Arthur, is a retired lieutenant commander who taught antisubmarine warfare tactics for the Navy. According to the F.B.I., he admitted giving documents to his brother.